

Task Force Presentation to the
Kindergarten to College Work Group
School Counseling Leaders Task Force
December 14, 2006

- 1) What is the purpose of the task force? List the names of the task force's members.

The purpose of the P-20 School Counseling Leadership Task Force is to promote *student success* and educational *opportunity* by providing leadership and advocacy to ensure implementation of a comprehensive counseling program in every K-12 school in Montana. The task force has undertaken activities to support and strengthen school counseling at all levels.

This initiative was first begun in January 2003 by the Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education and the Deputy Superintendent for Public Instruction, largely in response to the October 2002 Pathways to College Roundtable which brought together 50 stakeholders to discuss barriers to postsecondary access for Montana students, especially low-income and first-generation students. The important part that school counseling programs can play in providing equal access to success in postsecondary education for Montana students was highlighted in the group's discussions and final recommendations.

As the Board of Education's former P-20 Committee developed, it made sense to bring several pre-existing efforts under the auspices of the committee and the P-20 framework. In January 2006 the P-20 Committee assumed oversight of the School Counseling Initiative and appointed the following members to a reconstituted Leadership task force.

Mark Nelson, Co-Chair, Professor, Counselor Education, MSU-Bozeman
Barb Holden, Co-Chair, President Montana School Counselor Association
Roger Barber, Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
Larry Baker, Dean of Education, MSU-Bozeman
Darrell Stolle, Professor, Educational Psychology, University of Montana
Carrie Stefanatz, Representative, MSCA, and School Counselor, St. Ignatius Schools
Sherry Jones, Counselor, Polson High School
Spencer Sartorius, Office of Public Instruction
Darrell Rud, Executive Director, Montana School Administrators Association
Bob Vogel, Montana School Boards Association
Erik Burke, MEA-MFT
Linda Peterson, Division Administrator, Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
Arlene Parisot, Director, Workforce Development, OCHE
James Nowlin, Professor of Counseling, MSU-Billings
Pete Donovan, Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, Board of Public Education
Rene Dubay, Director of Partnerships for Access, OCHE

2) Define the problem that your task force seeks to address.

No one is more central to the goal of increasing student aspirations and achievement than school counselors who are in a unique position to make sure that all students have access to the information, resources and support they need. The role school counselors play in increasing student success and opportunities through the implementation of a state school counseling program model based on national standards is becoming more widely recognized by key stakeholders and policymakers. However, there are various issues and circumstances that affect the ability of Montana schools and educators to provide students with comprehensive school counseling services throughout their elementary and secondary careers. The School Counseling Leadership Task Force is in the process of identifying, documenting and understanding the nature of each major barrier to this goal.

3) What are the recommended solutions for solving the problem?

The task force did not reach the point of making recommendations in the original time-frame as a result of the hiatus in its work during the transition from the BOE P-20 Committee to the Kindergarten to College Work Group. At its first meeting in February 2006 the task force formed work groups to address the main issues related to its charge and objectives. The four work groups -- Data, Policy, Outreach and Implementation -- divided the identified task force objectives listed below. Significant progress was made by each work group as of spring 2006. At its recent December 8 meeting, the task force reviewed the status of each objective and work group and committed to achieving short and long-term goals with progress to be reported to the full task force beginning in spring 2007.

Task Force Objectives:

- Review current state policies and local practices related to school counseling in Montana.
- Review the Montana School Counseling Model adopted by MSCA.
- Design professional development training/materials to support implementation and evaluation of the Montana school counseling program model.
- Review alignment in Montana University System counselor education programs.
- Identify and discuss mechanisms to better align K-12 and MUS school counseling programs and services.
- Identify how to best integrate and utilize school counselors and school counseling programs in related K-12, MUS, P-20 and Access efforts.
- Determine issues needing additional discussion/attention and convene short-term working groups to address issues and make specific recommendations.
- Encourage broader participation in the Montana School Counselor Association.
- Provide support and guidance to all Montana stakeholders including administrators, school boards, teacher associations, etc. regarding the adoption, implementation, and assessment of the MSCA Montana School Counseling Model.
- Ensure that school counselors and school counseling programs are appropriately and most effectively included and integrated in other P-20 activities and conversations

4) What action does your task force recommend for the Board of Education? Explain why.

The School Counseling Leadership Committee remains committed to its purpose and goals. While it will not have specific recommendations to present at the January 18 Board of Education meeting, task force members intend to actively continue their work on identified objectives and activities in the coming months in preparation for the July BOE meeting. It is anticipated there will be a substantive report with recommendations by the July BOE meeting.